



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA STATE TREASURER PHIL ANGELIDES

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ANGELIDES TAKES STATEWIDE DRIVE TO FIGHT REPUBLICAN EDUCATION CUTS TO LOS ANGELES

*TREASURER JOINED BY SENATOR CEDILLO, ASSEMBLYMAN NUÑEZ, L.A. SCHOOLS
SUPERINTENDENT ROMER AND COALITION OF PARENTS AND EDUCATORS TO SAVE
SCHOOL SPENDING AND URGE GOP LAWMAKERS TO END BUDGET STALEMATE*

LOS ANGELES, CA – California State Treasurer Phil Angelides today brought his fight to save school spending to the State's largest city, where he and other state leaders urged students, parents and educators to join the campaign for a "smart, on-time state budget that protects education, which is at the heart and soul of California's future."

Angelides, speaking at a news conference at Gratts Elementary School, urged the Legislature to reject the more than \$7 billion in education cuts that Republican lawmakers have proposed over the next two fiscal years. The Treasurer pointed out that those cuts add up to a \$1,200 cut for each of the State's six million students – or about \$38,000 for every public school classroom in the State.

The Treasurer also pointed out that Republican legislative leaders have effectively shut down budget negotiations – on education spending and everything else – by refusing to consider any spending plan that includes a tax increase, and by threatening the political livelihood of any GOP lawmaker who falls out of line. Angelides warned that schools risk losing \$11 billion next year alone for specified, or "categorical" programs – such as class-size reduction, special education, and child nutrition – if California is ensnared in a Republican-forced budget stalemate. That \$11 billion represents about 26 percent of what schools would otherwise receive from the State.

"The Republican position on the budget is wrong for our children, wrong for the future of California and wrong for our long-term economic progress," Angelides said. "It is time for the Republican leadership to step back from the precipice, come to the bargaining table and try to fashion a budget that is consistent with the priorities of the State for the years ahead. That means investing in education for our future."

The Treasurer pointed out that the education cuts would be particularly damaging to the State's Latino community. Today, an estimated 43 percent of the State's public school students are Latinos; by 2010 that number is projected to grow to 52 percent.

“None of us – Republican, Democrat or Independent – should ever forget that the most important thing we can do to seed the future of success is to educate our children,” Angelides said. “Any combination of education cuts and budget delays will be hurtful to our students and their education, causing further chaos for classroom funding at a time when we can least afford to shortchange our investment in this State’s future.”

The Treasurer visited Los Angeles today to kick off the second leg of a statewide drive he launched earlier this year, during which he visited schools from Eureka to San Diego – and many points between – to call on students, parents and educators to join together to campaign to save school spending from proposed state budget cuts.

Angelides told those gathered at Gratts Elementary that he had both good news and bad news to report. The good news is that since the Treasurer began visiting public schools earlier this year, the Governor and Democratic lawmakers have restored some of the education funding that had been proposed for cuts in January. “We all deserve some credit for that,” he said, “for sending a clear message to the decision makers in Sacramento that people up and down the State truly do care about quality schools, smaller class sizes and up-to-date text books. It shows we can make a difference.”

As for the bad news, the Treasurer said Republicans are holding up the budget and demanding even deeper education cuts – cuts that will be too hurtful to the younger generation that will grow up to become this State’s next workforce. “Shouldn’t these children be as best equipped as possible to take on that challenge?” he asked.

Joining the Treasurer at the news conference was State Senator Gil Cedillo, D-Los Angeles, who said, “We have the 5th largest economy in the world with over \$1.4 trillion dollars in economic activity. It is shameful that we cannot get the eight Republican votes needed to pass a budget that adequately funds education, public safety and healthcare for the people of California.”

Added Los Angeles Unified Schools Superintendent Roy Romer, “This District has just undergone a severe and painful budget cutting process to address the state budget shortfall and with the goal of protecting our core programs. We have not had to cut any teachers and we cannot afford to make any further reductions as that would impact the academic success we have been experiencing over the past few years.”

In addition, Gratts Elementary Principal Luis Valentino said, “Our students should not be caught in the middle of the budget debate. Given the academic challenges they are expected to overcome, they deserve full access to a comprehensive curriculum, by fully qualified teachers, with sufficient resources. This requires money – they deserve it!”

Angelides acknowledged that “no one likes new or higher taxes.” But the Treasurer pointed to several economists, including Edward Leamer of the UCLA/Anderson Forecast and Nobel recipient Joseph Stiglitz, whose studies have concluded that deep spending cuts in areas like education will harm the economy.

In a letter earlier this year to the Governor and lawmakers, Angelides asked that additional revenue options be considered to fund education at the level needed to foster continued progress for future generations.

Nothing has transpired over the last year to lead Californians “to retreat from our commitment to first-class schools,” the Treasurer wrote in his letter. “Indeed there is ample evidence that our increased investment in education over the past few years already has begun to yield positive results.”

On Friday, the Treasurer pointed to a recent, well-respected public opinion poll that showed how Republican lawmakers in Sacramento are out of step with their constituents back home.

The poll, conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, reported that 67 percent of Californians are willing to pay higher taxes to maintain current funding for K-12 public education. The Treasurer called on all Californians to contact Republican lawmakers in Sacramento, and ask them a simple question: “Are they willing to stand with the two thirds of Californians who want to protect education, even if it means paying a temporary tax increase to help us ride out this financial storm?”

The Treasurer also reminded everyone that there is much work to do for next year, too. “Once we get this budget behind us,” he said, “it's imperative that we start immediately planning for next year's effort. We must vow that we will never again allow the forces of this State who would deny our children a quality education to hold our future hostage. Next year, we will take the lead, we will never let it go, and we will win the fight.”